

## tripping and falling

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# tripping and falling

by [orphan\\_account](#)

## Summary

"If it were solely up to you, our wedding would be a two minute civil ceremony, and then you'd forbid me from ever mentioning it to anyone," Antonio teases.

"You forget that I've never actually agreed to marry you in the first place," Lovino mutters.

## Notes

This idea has been kicking around in my hetalia fic bucket list for years. The original prompt/premise was simply that Spain is clumsy and accident prone. It was literally just supposed to be a tiny ficlet type thing but then I thought, since it's April, why not reference the Entente Cordiale a little and make the set up for the plot about France and England getting married, and then the story snowballed and became what it is now. I hope you like it!

## Friday, April Seventh - Afternoon

### Chapter Summary

Antonio and Lovino arrive in London for Francis and Arthur's wedding.

London, it seems, is always cold.

"They call this *Spring*?" Lovino asks as they step out of the sliding doors at Heathrow Airport. "This is like December back home."

Antonio isn't sure if Lovino is referring to Spain or to Italy, but the sentiment is applicable in both cases.

Lovino cranes his neck to peek out from the large glass awning they're currently sheltered under- the clouds are low and dark and it is just about to rain.

"Who gets married in such shitty weather, anyway?" he complains, flinching when a big fat raindrop hits him right between the eyes. "They couldn't have done this in Paris? It has to be warmer in Paris. Rainy London is no place for a wedding."

"Ah yes, because *you're* such an expert," Antonio teases. "You don't even *like* weddings. If it were solely up to *you*, our wedding would be a two minute civil ceremony, and then you'd forbid me from ever mentioning it to anyone."

"You forget that I've never actually agreed to marry you in the first place," Lovino mutters, and then says, "this isn't even a wedding, really. Those two have been going at it for centuries, it's not like getting hitched will change anything."

Antonito sighs. On the one hand, Lovino is right- weddings do seem a little trivial when you've been together for longer than a lifetime. For Arthur and Francis, this is more of an anniversary, a renewal of vows. But on the other hand, part of Antonio is still human; he still has a heart that beats and races and wants. And part of what he wants is to be married, even if he already knows that he'll be with Lovino forever anyway.

He looks back at Lovino over his shoulder as he steps out into the rain, reaching blindly for the door handle of the nearest available taxi. His foot comes down on the edge of the curb as his other foot lifts, and he loses his balance.

He's already hitting the ground before he realises he's falling, sprawled out on his back, one leg bent awkwardly underneath him, head throbbing from where it connected with the pavement. He sits up, the world around him wet and grey and spinning a little. He can hear someone nearby gasp, and someone else laughing- he doesn't have to guess who.

Lovino keeps laughing until their luggage and suit bags and soaking wet selves are loaded into the taxi, which pulls out into traffic after Antonio gives the driver the name of their hotel.

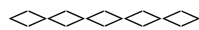
"You're so *meeeeean*, Lovi," Antonio groans, rubbing the back of his head. "I could have been really hurt! I could have a concussion!"

Lovino stops laughing but keeps smiling, pushing Antonio's hand away and combing his fingers through Antonio's hair at the sore spot on his skull.

"Tch. You'll be fine." He doesn't sound nearly as dismissive as Antonio knows he was trying to sound.

Antonio smiles and uses this position to his advantage. He reaches up and grabs Lovino's wrist, pulling him in so that he can kiss the very spot where the first of the raindrops had landed.

"Chigi- cut it out, bastard." Lovino smacks the side of Antonio's head, but it's a half-hearted gesture at best. Antonio just kisses him again and then laughs at his red face for the rest of the ride to the hotel.



The hotel suite is bigger and fancier than Lovino had expected, considering they're only staying for a few days. There's a large lounge area that opens up to a full kitchen on one side, with a door to the bedroom on the other wall. Everything is white, the walls and the cabinets and the leather of the couches. All the door handles and light fixtures are shiny chrome, and the only things on the walls are pictures of the ocean, rocky coasts and crashing waves captured and framed. The floor is dark wood and the rug in the lounge is the same colour as the clouds outside.

The only thing remotely familiar about this room is the stone fireplace, rough and natural where the rest of it is clean and manicured. It reminds Lovino of the one they have at home, only the one at home is more than a hundred years old and actually burns wood.

Lovino leaves his luggage by the couch and barely looks around before he goes right for the bedroom door.

The bedroom is identical to the rest of the suite, white and cold but peaceful just the same. It's probably almost the size of the lounge area- it seems smaller, though, what with the enormous bed taking up one side of the room. It's high and poofy and kind of resembles a marshmallow. Lovino doesn't feel that tired, but he can't wait to test out the mattress.

"You didn't have to book the penthouse," he calls, stepping over to the large window which overlooks the Thames. The curtains are pale grey and gossamer and Lovino runs the fabric between his fingers, suddenly restless in a way he can't explain.

"I like to spoil you." Antonio stands in the doorway, leaning on the frame with one shoulder while he unbuttons his shirt.

Lovino scoffs, but the breath catches in his throat when he turns around and sees Antonio, shirt undone, head bowed, looking over at him through those annoyingly long eyelashes of his.

"When's the party?" Lovino drops forward onto the bed and leans up on his elbows.

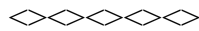
"Not 'til tomorrow." Antonio rounds the bed, pulling Lovino onto his back and crawling over him. Lovino puts his hands to Antonio's bare chest and frowns. His skin is usually so much warmer than this, bronzed by the sun and soaked in its heat. The clouds have dimmed his glow- he doesn't belong in such a dreary place. He belongs on beaches, in his tomato fields, walking through vineyards and dancing in firelight. He belongs in his home, in their home, in Lovino's bed and Lovino's arms.

It strikes Lovino, just how sentimental he's being, how close he is to writing mental poetry about Antonio's skin of all things. And in London, just about the least romantic place he can think of. If he were in Paris, it might seem less strange, perhaps. If he were at home, under the stars, it would almost be normal. And just how long has he been doing this- being with Antonio is nothing new, so why are his feelings suddenly changing? He must be more jetlagged than he thought.

"Roma?" Antonio whispers. "Something wrong?"

It's then that Lovino realises he's been staring. He lifts his head and kisses Antonio, pulling back only so that he can answer. His hands are already working on Antonio's belt.

"It's nothing. Now shut up and kiss me."



Lovino, as much as he'll never admit it, becomes an octopus in his sleep. It's a familial thing, as far as Antonio can tell, one of the traits that both of the Vargas brothers share, even if one of them wishes it weren't so.

This is how Antonio and Lovino always end up tangled together on the two feet of space closest to the edge of the bed, no matter how big the bed may be. Big beds are great for all kinds of things, but when it comes to sleeping, for them, a king size mattress might as well be a couch. Antonio wouldn't change it for the world.

He wakes up to the growl of his stomach and the persistent rhythm of Lovino's soft (adorable) snoring- another one of those things he will never admit to doing. Antonio looks around for a clock, but there isn't one, and his phone is in the other room. He notes that the light has changed, the sky having gone from rainy afternoon to rainy evening. The sun is barely managing to break through the clouds as it sets over the city skyline

This place is a far cry from their estate back in Spain. They're a world away from the Mediterranean, from the sprawling ranch house and terracotta rooftops, the fruit trees that shade the veranda where he and Lovino spend so much of their time. The hallways full of carefully cluttered decorations from all sorts of places, memories spanning back centuries. The low ceilings covered in mosaics and murals, hand-woven rugs on stone floors and quilts

of every colour thrown over the backs of chairs. Their bed, just as big as this one, with cool silk sheets and more pillows than anyone needs.

There's a warmth to their home that Antonio has never been able to find anywhere else. And he's been everywhere, the spirit of discovery having never really left him, even after the great expeditions had ceased. But he's never encountered anything that can compare to the smell of the earth on his skin after a day in the fields, or the taste of good wine. He could comb every inch of the earth and never find the same rare sweetness of Lovino's smile, or the same familiar comfort of his skin, or a light that glows the way Lovino's eyes do by candlelight.

"Mmph," Lovino grunts, half of his face squished against Antonio's chest. "What time is it?"

"Dinner time," Antonio replies, remembering just how hungry he is.

"Meh. Let's get room service."

Antonio watches Lovino stretch, arms reaching high above his head, fingers splayed wide open before he curls back in on himself, obviously pretending like he wasn't just glued to Antonio's side.

"Aw, can't we go out, Lovi? *Please?*" He grabs Lovino by the hip and pulls him back in, sliding his fingertips up Lovino's spine and smiling when Lovino shivers.

"Bastard! Your hands are freezing."

"Let me take you to dinner," Antonio murmurs, lips pressed to Lovino's ear. "We can go wherever you want, and when we get back, I'll do anything you ask me to."

Lovino pulls him back by the hair and looks him in the eye, wary and suspicious.

"What are you up to?"

"Up to? Amore, what are you talking about?"

He watches Lovino consider it, can almost hear the gears whirring and clicking in his head.

"Fine. We'll go out."

"Excellent!"

Antonio rolls over, intent on getting to the shower first (even though it's more than likely big enough for the both of them). He expects to have plenty of space on his other side, but he miscalculates just how close he was to the edge of the bed and he-

-tumbles in a graceless heap onto the floor, hitting it face first and taking most of the covers with him.

"Oh my *God*," Lovino snorts, dissolving into near hysterical laughter. "Oh my God."

"I'm fine, thanks for asking," Antonio mumbles, but then, he's already laughing as well.



## Friday, April Seventh - Evening

### Chapter Summary

The boys go out for dinner and there are some ~deep conversations~

Twenty minutes later, the elevator doors open onto the hotel lobby. Lovino and Antonio step out of the elevator. Antonio has his hand inside Lovino's jacket, thumb pressed to his spine and one finger through his belt loop, a warm and distracting touch that forces Lovino to put his arm around Antonio's waist as well. It's way more physical contact than Lovino is usually comfortable with in public, but he allows it- partially because he actually loves it, but mostly because of the knowledge that at least they're not going to be seen like this by anyone who knows them.

"Ey, fratello!"

*Shit.*

Lovino shrugs out of Antonio's embrace, turning just in time for Feliciano to crash headlong into him in a mess of flailing arms and gleeful exclamations.

"What are you doing here." He already knows, of course, but he asks anyway.

"We're here for the wedding, of course! We just checked in!"

And there is Ludwig, a few feet away at the front desk, looking over his shoulder and nodding to them in a way that would seem standoffish to anyone else but is in fact quite friendly. Lovino nods back. Antonio waves. Lovino spins and glares at him, silently demanding to know if he had anything to do with this 'chance' meeting. Antonio raises his hands in denial. Lovino scoffs.

"Why are you only just getting here *now*?" he asks his brother.

"We missed our flight," Feliciano admits. "It was my fault, but lucky for us, Ludwig had got tickets for a second flight too, just in case!"

"Yes, how lucky for us," Lovino comments under his breath while Feliciano bounds off to grab Ludwig and drag him back over.

"Well," Lovino says awkwardly, "as much as we'd love to chat-" *or not*- "we were just headed to dinner, so-"

"Dinner? That sounds great! I'm starving!"



Ludwig looks thoroughly mortified. Lovino thought he would have gotten used to Feliciano's occasional bouts of daftness by now.

"Feliciano," Ludwig starts, "I don't think-"

"Nonsense!" Antonio, ever the people-pleaser, just *has* to put his two cents in. "Please, join us if you'd like."

Either Feliciano is actually a snake charmer, or Ludwig is even more of a push over than Lovino thought. One look, one pout, and Ludwig agrees.

"*Bueno!*" Antonio smiles. "Let's go!"

Lovino is honestly a little shocked. When Antonio had been so insistent on going out, Lovino had been at least a little bit sure that Antonio was going to propose this evening. The comment at the airport about what their wedding would be like, the lavishness of the hotel room- it seemed like Antonio was ramping up to something. But then going and inviting Feliciano and Ludwig to join them- that doesn't seem like something someone would do if they intended to propose.

Then again, maybe Antonio wants at least *some* of their friends to be there when he does it, to make a scene and everything. Maybe he planned all of this. Or, maybe they really are just going to dinner, and there isn't going to be a ring at the end of it.

He doesn't know why, but the latter of the two options is the one that makes him disappointed.



"Have you ever thought about getting married?"

Dinner is winding to a close. The hotel happens to be on the same street as a number of fine dining establishments, out of which Lovino chose the only one that serves food remotely resembling that of his homeland. There has been salad and pasta and a little too much wine, which no doubt helped the somewhat awkward conversation develop into pleasant chit chat.

And now, while Lovino and Feliciano bicker about desert at their table across the room, Antonio and Ludwig are sitting at the bar, each with a drink in their hand, each feeling warmed from the inside and soft around the edges.

"I have," Ludwig answers, "given the subject a great deal of consideration."

"And what conclusion have you come to?"

Antonio has always respected the fact that Ludwig, while intimidating when he needs to be, is really a man who thinks carefully before he speaks, who has cultivated a sense of self-control and rationale that has only come from decades of self-discipline. They all have sins in their pasts, but Ludwig has never tried to make others forget about his transgressions; he has only tried to make himself worthy of forgiveness.

"Veneziano and I have been together for a long time," he begins. "He has been with me through the darkest years of my life, through the times when I was turned into something less than human, the times when even I didn't know who I was or if I would ever find myself again."

His eyes are trained on Feliciano, who is oblivious to the conversation, full of unbridled exuberance in his interaction with Lovino, ever the complete opposite to Ludwig's stoicism. The corner of Ludwig's mouth turns up, and it's the closest thing to a smile that Antonio's ever seen from him.

"There were times when he could have left me- times when he *should* have, by anyone's standards, including my own. He is the only one who has seen the worst parts of me and is still able to love me as deeply as he did before. I could never find anyone who-" he pauses- "there could never be anyone else."

"Sounds like marriage to me," Antonio observes.

"Precisely. What we have is more than what a marriage is in any official capacity, so for us, there is no need for the custom."

"I see."

"That is not to say I am against it. If Feliciano wanted a wedding, I'd gladly give him one, but it's not as if either of our governments would recognise it as a legally binding ceremony."

"Ah, yes." It is difficult but not impossible to forget that not all of Europe is equal, even in this day and age. He wonders if that's the reason why Lovino doesn't want to get married.

"You are considering marriage as well, *ja*?"

"*Si*," Antonio admits. "We've talked about it before, but never seriously. He's always talked about marriage as if he hates it, or thinks it's foolish, or at least as if it's something for other people and not for him."

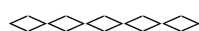
"Do you love him?" The look on Ludwig's face says that he knows it's an obvious question, but Antonio indulges him.

"More than anything," he replies. "More than I've ever loved anyone. I've been everywhere in the world, Ludwig, but Lovino- he is my *home*. And I want everyone to know it. I want it to be indisputably true."

"And tell me, do you know that he feels the same about you?"

Antonio laughs. "Surely you're aware of how headstrong he is. He wouldn't still be with me after all this time if he didn't want to be."

"Then," Ludwig says, "What do you have to be afraid of?"



Italian food is best when it's made in Italy. That's just common sense. Food in England is bad. This is also common sense. But the food at this restaurant is defying common sense, and honestly, Lovino couldn't be more pleased.

"This tiramisu is so *good*, Roma, try some!" Feliciano shoves a forkful of chocolate in his face.

"I can't eat another bite," Lovino protests, and it's true. He has plans for he and Antonio when they back to the hotel, and those plans do not include going into a food coma and sleeping the rest of tonight and tomorrow away.

"More for me," Feliciano says in that sing-song voice of his, and Lovino has obviously had too much wine because he's not usually this fond of his idiot brother.

"Hey, Feli," he whispers, glancing at Antonio, who is over at the bar and listening intently to whatever Ludwig is saying. He knows they can't hear him from so far away, but he keeps it down anyway. "Do you ever wanna get married?"

"What, to Ludwig?" Feliciano's mouth is full of cake but he's still talking, and it's like when they were kids all over again. "I dunno, I thought we already kind of were. We love each other, we've been together forever, and we're never gonna break up- isn't that marriage?"

"Yeah, I guess, but-" Antonio looks over at them, and Lovino tries his best not to seem suspicious. "I mean, what about having a real wedding, and wearing rings and calling each other husband and shit."

"I guess neither of us think that it really matters one way or the other. It's not like I'd say no if he asked, though. I'd do it if it'd make him happy."

"Really?"

"*Si*. That's part of what marriage is too, you know. Doing things for *each other*, not just for yourself."

At the bar, Antonio pats Ludwig on the shoulder and turns back to his drink. Ludwig looks at Feliciano and then discretely dons his coat and steps outside.

"I'll be back in a minute, Feli," Lovino says, and follows Ludwig.



"*Oi*, Herr Potato Head."

Ludwig freezes like a deer in the headlights, eyes wide and flickering behind the flames of his cigarette lighter. Lovino just sighs and puts out his hand. Ludwig hands him the pack and then the lighter, taking a drag whilst Lovino lights up.

"I really don't do this often," Ludwig confesses. "Feliciano doesn't like it."

"Yeah, neither does Antonio," Lovino relates, holding his breath for a moment, the smoke hot and bitter in his mouth while the air is cold and sweet on his face.

"I'm going to ask you something," he says a moment later, when the silence between them has finally gone from weird to comfortable. "But you can't think it's stupid, and you can't tell anyone I asked you."

Ludwig nods his agreement.

"I'm not gonna make you tell me everything you and Antonio were just talking about in there, but I *do* wanna know if he said anything to you about... proposing."

"You mean, is he planning to do it tonight?" Ludwig shakes his head. "No."

Lovino isn't surprised this time when he's disappointed instead of relieved. He sighs a long and cloudy breath and waits for the silence to get weird again.

"I am going to ask you something," Ludwig tells him, blowing smoke as he does. "And you don't have to tell me your answer, but I want you to think about it."

"Okay." Lovino is distinctly uncomfortable with how insightful Ludwig seems to be.

"If he *did* ask you to marry him, what would you say?"

Before Lovino can open his mouth to retort, the restaurant doors swing open, light and warmth and noise spilling out into the street along with Feliciano and Antonio, who are both laughing at some unknown joke. Ludwig and Lovino panic, dropping their half-smoked cigarettes onto the sidewalk and stomping them out, Lovino waving his hands to clear the smoke from around himself while Ludwig simply walks away.

"Oh, there you are!" Feliciano calls, all but skipping toward them. As soon as he gets within three feet, he stops, smile turning to a frown. "Were you two just smoking?"

Lovino is sure they've been caught- Feliciano is an idiot, but he's not an *idiot*.

"Oh well," Feliciano pats Ludwig's chest. "At least you two are getting along for once. You'll just have to brush your teeth twice before you kiss me goodnight, Ludwig."

He walks over and hugs Lovino- he says goodbyes until the wedding tomorrow and then takes Ludwig's hand and wanders off in the opposite direction of the hotel, clearly not done with his evening yet.

"For the record, I don't care if you brush your teeth before you kiss me." Antonio raises his eyebrows and Lovino can't even bring himself to be annoyed. He looks at Antonio and smirks.

He's not done with his evening yet, either.

# Friday, April Seventh - Night

## Chapter Summary

This is just. Straight up smut.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They've barely made it back into their room before Antonio is on him, using Lovino's weight to close the door and then keeping him pinned there, mouthing at his jaw while his cold hands slip under the hem of Lovino's shirt. Lovino reaches blindly to his left, feeling along the wall for a light switch. He finds one and hits it- the fireplace comes to life, bringing with it just enough light to see each other properly.

"I let you take me out to dinner," Lovino says, breathless, while both of them wrestle out of their jackets. "I held up my end of the bargain- you have to hold up yours."

"Of course." Antonio is smiling- Lovino can feel his lips curving up against his throat. "What would you like me to do?"

Lovino doesn't hesitate. "Get on your knees," he orders.

Antonio does, kissing him once before he goes, dragging his lips down Lovino's neck and lifting Lovino's shirt so he can press gentle kisses to his stomach. The sight of it makes Lovino's cock twitch in his jeans- he's been thinking about this for what seems like hours, has been half-hard from the idea of it since they got on the elevator, Antonio staring at him the whole time, like Lovino was something to be devoured, like he'd take him right there if he could. It's amazing how something as small as a look can set Lovino off so quickly.

"Mmm, Lovi," Antonio licks his lips while he unzips Lovino's jeans. "You want it bad, huh?"

"Shut up, bastard," Lovino snaps, tugging hard at Antonio's hair, because he knows they both love it when he does. The soft curls fit so nicely between his fingers and they always look like they're just dying to be pulled.

There's a moment of silence, of tenseness in the air, and then Lovino breaks it with a shout, head thudding back against the door when Antonio takes Lovino's cock into his mouth, bypassing the pretense of teasing (unusual for Antonio, but Lovino's not complaining). His mouth is hot and wet and *God*, he's doing that thing with his tongue that makes Lovino's knees go weak. If it weren't for Antonio's hands holding onto him by the hips, Lovino might very well collapse.

"Fuck, *fuck* Toni." He's having a hard time remembering his plan. He feels like he could stay here for hours, even though he knows he won't last anywhere near that long. He wants this, he wants it all the time- but it's not *all* he wants right now.

Antonio pulls away as if he's read Lovino's mind, catching his breath and gazing up at Lovino in such a reverent way that it makes his heart jump a beat or two. His lips are red and slick and shining in the low light and Lovino has to kiss them, has to drop to his knees and lick his way into Antonio's mouth, tasting himself there and moaning when he does.

"What now?" asks Antonio, the question feeling like a kiss, their mouths are so close.

"Now," Lovino whispers, "you're going to lay me out on that rug and fuck me 'til I can't walk right tomorrow."

Antonio strips Lovino slowly and opens him up even slower, every touch setting fire to Lovino's body, getting his blood up and making him blush red all over. Antonio keeps expecting to get admonished, for Lovino call him a tease, but he takes it all so well, mewling and squirming and holding white-knuckled to the carpet while the glow of the fireplace lights up his skin. By the time Antonio slicks himself up, Lovino is desperate. His cock his red and leaking all over his stomach and he just cannot keep his mouth shut.

"*Ahn- Antonio*," he whines, voice tripping and falling over every syllable. "I *need* it, I need you *inside* me, I've needed it all *day*."

"I bet you have." Antonio kneels between Lovino's spread legs. "Begging looks so *good* on you, mi amor."

"Shut up and fuck me," Lovino demands, and then, much softer, "*please*."

Making love to Lovino feels like coming home- their bodies know each other so well, every part of them pulling the other in and holding them there. Antonio leans over Lovino, arms caging him in while he sets a relentless rhythm, one that has Lovino crying out with every beat, a never ending chorus of curses and prayers, his Italian and Spanish and English bleeding together into a language that only Antonio understands, simply because he is the only one who ever gets to hear it.

He fucks Lovino harder, pulling one of Lovino's legs over his shoulder and nearly folding him in half. Lovino almost screams, the secret language turning to simple affirmations and then to wordless cries, each of them punctuation for every snap of Antonio's hips, every brush of his cock against Lovino's prostate.

"*Christ*, Lovi, you feel so *good*." He barely has enough air in his lungs to get the words out of his mouth. "I'm so close."

"Me too," Lovino answers hoarsely. He's in a daze now, the only thing real being the weight of Antonio on top of him, the smell of his skin and the sweet slide of his cock as he fills Lovino up.

"Tell me you love me." He's talking without thinking, now, but he's too far gone to be pissed at himself right now, too given over to what he really wants. "Tell me you're *mine*."

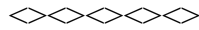
Something warm falls across Lovino's face. It's tears, he belatedly realises. Antonio is crying.

"Te amo," he whispers. "Soy todo tuyo. Soy solo tuyo."

Lovino hears this and he comes, cock untouched, pulsing and releasing between their bodies. Antonio follows him over the edge less than a second later, and Lovino clings to his shoulders, digs his fingernails deep enough to leave marks. He sees nothing but white for a good long while, and when he does breathe again, it feels like he was drowning. Antonio is completely still above him, chest heaving in time with Lovino's, both of them trying to come down from the high without crashing and burning.

"Te amo," Antonio says again, this time with his mouth against Lovino's ear.

"Ti amo anch'io," Lovino replies, and he means it like he's never meant it before.



They clean themselves up and pull the covers off the bed and curl up again in front of the fireplace. Neither of them intend to sleep the whole night there but Lovino passes out anyway, less of an octopus and more of a cat, curled up along Antonio's side where all the warmth is, hands pillowed under his head and forehead pressed to the curve of Antonio's shoulder.

Antonio watches Lovino sleep, listens with awe to the tide of his breathing, and begins to come up with a plan.

## Chapter End Notes

Te/Ti amo - I love you

Ti amo anch'io - I love you too

Soy todo tuyo. Soy solo tuyo. - I am yours. I am only yours.

I wrote this entire chapter last night between the hours of 12-4 am and I'm a lazy writer who uses Google translate so... I'm sorry if those translations are skewed.

# Saturday, April Eighth - Morning

## Chapter Summary

The day of the wedding.

Lovino wakes up slowly, sore but sated and alone. He stretches his arm to the side and realises he's in bed- Antonio must have carried him here at some point during the night. He's done things like that before- Lovino can only imagine how much Antonio must love it. What's strange is that he's *gone*- neither of them are particularly early risers, though Antonio *does* like the morning more than Lovino does. But even if he is the one to wake up first, he usually doesn't get out of bed before Lovino wakes up as well.

He rolls over toward the window and throws an arm over his eyes- what's the point of curtains if they don't block any of the light? It's a good thing he doesn't get hung over. He drank a ton of wine last night, nervously downing glass after glass while he waited to see if Antonio would pop the question. Which he didn't. Lovino blames himself for his disappointment. He's never been very receptive to the idea of marriage, and by the time the idea is finally starting to sound nice, Antonio has been scared away from it, even if it's clearly something he wants.

*If you want something done right, you've got to do it yourself*, he thinks, and then, *no*, because if Antonio wants to be married then he's gonna have to stop being such a big chicken and *ask*.

"Toni," Lovino calls, thinking Antonio might be in the shower or something. No answer. Lovino reaches for the nightstand and grabs his phone to check the time. It's almost eleven. "Toni," he calls again. Still no answer.

Sighing, Lovino sits up, working out the kinks in his spine, wincing at the slight ache in his lower back as he swings his legs over the edge of the bed. He's a little wobbly on his feet at first, wrapping the whole duvet around himself and pulling it off the bed with him, the floor cold against the soles of his feet as he ventures out of the bedroom.

There, across the hall, is a note stuck to the bathroom door, written in a familiar hand on the hotel stationary.

*Gone out shopping*, it reads, *be back soon. xo*

Lovino snatches it off the door, pressing his thumb over the *xo*, smiling to himself and wondering what Antonio possibly could have gone shopping for, and how soon is soon?



Both of those questions are answered simultaneously when Antonio bustles in a moment later, arms laden with grocery bags.

"What's all this?" Lovino asks, leaning against the counter while Antonio loads things into the refrigerator. There's a bunch of tomatoes, some chicken and a bottle of sauvignon blanc.

"Francis texted- he's sending a car for us at two, and the wedding's not 'til three, so I thought, since we have time, I'd cook lunch. We have a whole kitchen here and it'd be a shame not to use it."

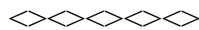
"But first," he says, putting his hand in his pocket, "let's go for a walk."

"A walk?" Lovino thought that might have been it, that Antonio had just been about to propose right there in the hotel kitchen while Lovino was wrapped in nothing but a duvet and still had bed head. Not the most romantic situation, but then, why should Lovino care if it's romantic or not?

"There's a park not far from here," Antonio explains. "And it stopped raining earlier- the sun is out and everything!"

Lovino looks toward the fireplace, considering.

"Yeah, okay," he agrees, honestly unsure if he's indulging Antonio or if he's really just indulging himself.



By some miracle, the sun stays out for the rest of the morning. It's a few minutes from the hotel to the park, where they wander along the paths while avoiding puddles and muddy spots. The leaves have begun to grow back on the trees, and the entire place has the smell of spring. This, Lovino thinks, wouldn't be such a bad place for a wedding.

The two of them walk arm-in-arm, steps in tandem though their minds are in different places. Or at least, Lovino knows his mind might be somewhere else. It's rare that the silence between them should be anything other than comfortable, but there's something in the air this morning, an unasked question that no one knows the answer to. Lovino is going crazy trying to think of something to say, something to talk about so that he doesn't have to tell Antonio what he's really thinking.

"So, where *is* this wedding anyway?"

"Arthur has property north of the city." Antonio seems equally grateful to have something trivial to discuss. "It's an old estate that wasn't being used by the nobility anymore. The house is more than a century old, and there's even a chapel on the grounds, apparently. Francis told me they decided to have the wedding here so that it would actually feel like they were travelling when they go to live in Paris for the summer."

"Uh huh." Knowing those two, there was most likely more to the decision than that. Francis probably lost a bet or something.

"It'll be beautiful out there in the countryside. Hopefully the weather holds out," Antonio remarks.

They're coming up on the edge of the park- there's a small set of stone steps built into the side of a little hill, beyond which is the street they entered the park from. Neither of them are really paying much attention to the ground beneath their feet. A child is laughing nearby, and both of them turn to look.

This time, when Antonio misses the top step and falls, he takes Lovino down with him.

They tumble forward, almost going head first before they both have the good sense to hunch their shoulders and roll into the fall. The steps aren't steep and there are only three of them, so thankfully there isn't that far to go before they hit the ground.

For Lovino, it's like this- he hears himself yell in surprise, and then his whole skeleton seems to jolt inside his body when he connects with the pavement. He lies still after that, a little afraid to move for fear he's broken something. All he can feel is the pain in his right side, elbow and shoulder and hip having taken the brunt of his weight. His right leg is beneath Antonio's left one- Antonio has rolled over onto his back, eyes closed, groaning softly and swearing under his breath in Spanish.

Lovino sits up stiffly, gingerly touching his head to check for sore spots, lifting his hand and flexing his fingers- they all bend just fine, and the pain has already started to go away. He looks over to Antonio to see if there's any permanent damage-

And that's when he sees the ring box.

It's sitting on the ground between them, small and red and velvet and completely unassuming under any other circumstances. It must have just fallen out of Antonio's pocket.

"Lovi, are you alright?" Antonio sits up, rubbing his neck, and he still hasn't opened his eyes.

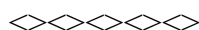
On impulse, Lovino snatches the box and pockets it, trying very hard not to think about why he's doing it, or what the consequences of it will be. He feels compelled, somehow, to make sure that if Antonio is going to propose, then it's not going to happen like this, by accident, because Antonio is a huge fucking klutz and because Lovino saw something he shouldn't have. Antonio deserves a better shot at it than that.

"I'm fine," he half-lies. "You?"

"I think so." Antonio hisses in pain as he says this, shaking his hand (so at least it's not broken). It is scraped though, palm to wrist scratched red by the pavement when he'd put his hands out to break his fall.

Antonio is probably expecting Lovino to be angry, or to laugh at him, but instead Lovino takes Antonio's hand and kisses it.

"Come on," he whispers. "Let's go get that cleaned up. You promised me lunch."



Lunch is delicious. Antonio makes chicken marinara and they eat it while standing at the kitchen counter, laughing their way through the bottle of sauvignon blanc, Antonio reminiscing about the Anglo-Spanish war and how there was a time he never would have gone to Arthur's wedding except to maybe light the church on fire. These things are long forgotten now, just old memories that come more with tall tales now than they do with any real bitterness. Most of the stories are ones Lovino's heard before, but Antonio tells them with such energy every time that they never cease to amuse Lovino. Antonio is glad to tell his stories yet again, animated and carefree and obviously of the belief that the ring box is still safe in his coat pocket.

Lovino wonders how long it will take for Antonio to realise that the box is gone. He wonders what Antonio's plan had been. He wonders what his own plan will be now.

# Saturday, April Eighth - Afternoon

## Chapter Summary

The wedding.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Antonio doesn't realise that the ring box has gone missing until it's time to leave for the wedding.

It's nearly two and their car will be here soon- Antonio is just putting his coat on when Lovino comes out of the bedroom, looking down at his phone, oblivious to the way Antonio's whole world stops spinning for a second and centers in on him. He looks stunning in the most effortless of ways, dressed in a dark red suit that somehow makes Antonio wonder if anyone else should be allowed to wear that colour. The lines of Lovino's body are long and relaxed as he taps away at his phone, other hand in his pocket.

Antonio's phone goes off.

"The car is here," he says after he checks the text. Lovino looks up at him in a perfectly unremarkable way, but Antonio's heart flies into his throat nonetheless. Lovino grabs his coat from the back of the couch and pulls it on and it's then that Antonio reaches into his own pocket to touch the ring box.

The box isn't there.

He doesn't panic right away- at first, he thinks he must have just put it somewhere else. He checks his other coat pocket, then his suit jacket, then his trousers- he doesn't find it.

*Then* he panics.

Quietly, though, managing to keep his composure, though sirens are going off in his head and his lungs seem to want more oxygen than he can give them. The only thing he can think is that he must have lost the box in the park, when he and Lovino fell. The rings will be long gone by now.

"Oi, Toni. *Toni*." Lovino is there, holding Antonio's arm and trying to catch his eye. Antonio doesn't know how long he's been frozen, staring off into space.

"You okay?" Lovino asks, taking hold of Antonio's injured hand. "Is something wrong?"

Antonio supposes he could just come clean and explain everything, that it would be the obvious thing to do at this point, but part of him feels compelled to make sure that if it's going to happen, that it doesn't happen like this, by accident, just because Antonio was clumsy and made a mistake. Lovino deserves better than that.

"No, no, it's nothing, I'm fine," he insists, proud of the way his voice only barely shakes on the word *fine*. It's not even the expense of the rings being lost that bothers him- it's what losing them *means*, what his somewhat superstitious mind has already started to tell him.

"Okay, if you say so," Lovino answers and kisses him- he tastes like marinara sauce and white wine and Antonio is dreadful and hopeful all at once.

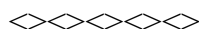
*What do you have to be afraid of?*



The English countryside really is beautiful, Lovino must admit, though its beauty is completely alien to him. With the sun beating down on the fields just north of the city, one forgets they're anywhere near civilization. It seems as if every house they pass is a secluded cottage, with mossy stone walls and faded white fences separating one pasture from the next. The gently sloping hills are dotted with boulders and bushes, small stands of trees and flocks of sheep gathered along property lines. It's a little like Tuscany, but with thorny hedges and heather instead of vineyards and olive trees. The light seems colder here too, but that could just be the tint of the town car's windows.

They both spend the whole drive staring out of opposite windows, but Lovino knows that Antonio isn't really seeing any of the scenery as it passes them by. Antonio's hands are in his lap, and he wrings them, knee bouncing constantly, a rhythm too fast for Lovino to keep track of. He rests his palm on Antonio's leg, fingers curving over his thigh and holding him still.

Antonio doesn't let on like he's noticed. Lovino knows he must have realised the rings were missing just before they left the hotel. And yet he hasn't said a thing about it. Curious.



The wedding is much smaller than Antonio would have thought someone as theatrical as Francis would plan, with all of his grandiose romanticism. Instead, there is nothing but a simply decorated stone chapel that looks to be at least a hundred years old, quite young compared to most of the people in attendance. Antonio catches sight of several of the other nations- almost all of Europe, most of the Americas, even several of the Asian nations have gathered beneath this vaulted ceiling.

There are others too that Antonio doesn't recognise, likely humans who have no idea what kind of wedding this actually is. He thinks they might be employees; Arthur must have staff that assist with the upkeep on this estate. They could simply be friends- Francis has never had a shortage of acquaintances. All in all, there can't be more than seventy-five people. Antonio had sort of expected there'd be twice that many.

By the time the ceremony starts, Antonio and Lovino have taken their seats near the front of the chapel. Lovino insisted on being at the aisle end of the pew, Antonio seated close beside him, armed draped casually over the back of the pew behind Lovino's shoulders, drawn to him even now, in all of his uncertainty- *especially* now, perhaps.

As the last of the guests settle into their seats, the music begins- a single violinist, Roderich in fact, stands off to the side of the altar, pulling the sweet melody of a waltz from the strings of his Stradivarius, the dips and swells of its sound quickly filling the room. The sun is streaming in through the narrow stained glass windows, amber and red fractals of light falling across the faces of all gathered, creating a surreal and even magical atmosphere. This has romance to it as well, Antonio realises, and smiles to himself at the idea of Francis being a part of something so understated and nuanced.

Arthur steps up to the altar, wearing white from head to toe with a single, red rose pinned to his lapel. He is accompanied by his best man, Alfred, as well as- Mark? Marion? (*Matthew*, Lovino will later remind him), both dressed in black and pinned with white roses instead of red ones. When all is said and done, those two have been like sons to Arthur and Francis, and having them be part of the ceremony is quite a nice testament to that shared history.

When the music picks up in volume and pace, there is a sudden gust of wind from the back of the chapel. All eyes turn to the open doors, and everyone stands as Francis enters the room, clad in a white suit to match Arthur's, rose and all. Francis *glows*, hair shimmering like a halo, gentle golden waves swaying around his face as he walks down the aisle, grinning from ear to ear.

Antonio quickly turns his head to catch a glimpse of the look on Arthur's face. He knows Arthur well, has known Arthur well for a very long time. He knows that Arthur is capable of humor and happiness, despite the serious and sometimes abrasive front he puts up for most of the world to see. But in all of Antonio's years of knowing Arthur, he has never seen Arthur this happy, this bright- his smile is radiant, and his eyes never stray from Francis, even as they begin to well with tears. It is as if Arthur and Francis are the only two people on Earth.

As everyone sits, Antonio turns his attention to Lovino- the look on his face is one of contentment and even cheer, not one of disdain or boredom as Antonio might have expected. Even more surprising, Lovino is the one to reach out and take one of Antonio's hands in both of his own, holding it in his lap and stroking back and forth over Antonio's knuckles until this single point of contact is the only thing Antonio can focus on.

There are words from the officiant and vows being spoken, a short and sweet ceremony full of honest and intimate emotion. Antonio tries his very best to pay attention, he really does- but all he is right now is lost, in Lovino's touch, in the question of if he'll ever have this, of if he'll ever work up the courage to ask Lovino, like he's been working up the courage for years now.

He imagines a wedding on the beach, his bare feet hot in the sand, slipping a ring onto Lovino's finger as he proclaims his undying love for Lovino in the presence of God and everyone else. He imagines Lovino's face lighting up with a smile like Arthur's, so rare and pure and unforgettable. He imagines it all changing but not changing. He can't imagine living with this desire and not seeing it to fruition.

At the front of the chapel, Arthur pulls Francis in for a kiss- it's the kiss of a lifetime, passionate and deep, like they haven't kissed in weeks. There are whoops and hollers from all sides of the room, a thunderous round of applause as Francis takes Arthur's hand and pulls him down the aisle and out into the warm spring day.

When Antonio comes back to himself, Lovino is gone, having let go of Antonio's hand and wandered off. Perhaps he simply wished to escape the crowd. Perhaps he wished to escape Antonio- Lovino is too smart not to have caught onto Antonio's plan- perhaps he is afraid that Antonio will propose at any second, afraid of having to say no, of what that would really mean, despite Antonio's insistence that their relationship would remain unchanged.

Antonio smiles sadly and puts his hand to his mouth. He has come to an impasse, with Lovino and with himself. Something has to give. He can only hope it will give soon, for better or for worse.

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry this is taking so long for me to finish- work has been nuts lately and I was on vacation, but I'm rested and ready to finish this baby up!

The reason I kind of glossed over the ceremony was a) because I wanted to post this sooner and it was giving me block, b) because I wanted to focus on Antonio's internal monologue and c) because I'm seriously considering writing a couple more fics about this wedding from other pairings point of view, namely Feli/Ludwig and Arthur/Francis (of course). Would y'all be interested in reading those? Let me know.

((also Antonio isn't an asshole- him forgetting Matthew's name is an homage to how the nations never know who Canada is. Lovino later reminding him who Matthew is is an homage to my head canon that Lovino and Matthew are friends???? idk where it came from but there it is))

# Saturday, April Eighth - Evening

## Chapter Summary

The final chapter! feat. more ~deep conversations~ and Francis in a dress because why not amirite?

## Chapter Notes

Thanks so much to everyone for reading! I hope you enjoy the final instalment of this little adventure :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Lovino is *not* hiding.

Sure, he's not with Antonio right now, and hasn't been for quite a while, all but fleeing the table as soon as dinner was over and spending the next sixty-two minutes in the bathroom or at the bar (which is an open one, thank *God*).

It's a known fact that Lovino hates parties like this, but he has been on his best behaviour all evening, smiling at his brother over the table, nodding through the bullshit small talk and eating almost everything on his plate. He has sipped his wine and kept his mouth shut and pointedly ignored the way Antonio kept looking at him, sad and strangely hurt, like he was a puppy and Lovino had just kicked him.

So now Lovino is having some well-deserved alone time, just relaxing with some cocktails and no inane conversation. So what if he keeps checking over his shoulder every five seconds to make sure Antonio isn't about to come looking for him? So what if he dreads the idea of going back to the hotel at the end of the night and having to act like nothing has happened, like neither he nor Antonio knows what the other one has discovered? That doesn't mean Lovino is hiding.

Okay. So *maybe* Lovino is hiding. A *little*.

Not that he needs to be- Antonio isn't anywhere in sight. Pretty much everyone from the ceremony is still here, all of them gathered in the almost ballroom-sized dining hall of Arthur's country mansion, seated at round tables in order of couples and or continents. He can see that neither of the grooms are at the head table, raised above everyone on a stage, and people have started to drift from their own seats, striking up conversations about Lord knows what with people from who knows where. Feliciano's voice can be heard easily, carrying over



everyone's heads, drifting up near the high painted ceiling. But Lovino has yet to find Antonio's curly head or his blue suit jacket anywhere in the crowd. No one has ventured near the corner where the bar has been set up, but the sun has gone down, so Lovino guesses that this side of the room will be overrun any minute now.

He says nothing to the bartender, other than to tell her to keep his glass full. She doesn't say anything to him, just does what he asked her to and smiles whenever he drops more money in her tip jar. He has a distinct feeling that she's probably onto him, that she's probably seen more than her fair share of drunk commitment-phobes and their hopelessly romantic significant others.

But that doesn't really describe them at all, does it? Lovino isn't afraid of commitment- not *really*- he decided a long time ago that he was going to be with Antonio forever, no matter what. Whether he's ever actually *told* Antonio that, he doesn't remember. As far as Antonio being the hopeless romantic- that part's true- or, Lovino has always thought so, anyway. But if it is, then why hasn't Antonio proposed already? He could have done it today or yesterday or any of the other *thousands* of days that they've been together. But he hasn't. And Lovino can't figure out *why*.

"Romano! How are you on this fine evening?"

Oh, *great*.

Lovino spins on his barstool to look at Francis, and his jaw nearly hits the floor.

"Are you fucking *kidding* me?" he says bluntly, before he can stop himself. Francis is no longer in his suit- it has been replaced with and over the top honest-to-God wedding gown. It's white and sparkly and Francis even has his hair and make-up done, what the *hell*?

"I don't know why you're acting so surprised. This is *far* from the strangest thing I've ever worn."

Lovino rolls his eyes but concedes the point with a nod and a wave of his hand.

"What do you want?" he asks.

"I was wondering if you know where Antonio is." Francis carefully sits on the stool next to Lovino's, smoothing his skirt over his knees.

"I haven't seen him." Lovino frowns into his glass, which has just become empty. "It's not my job to follow him around every second of the God-damned day," he grumbles.

Francis ignores him, turning to the bartender. "I'll have a glass of your finest red, *mon cher*, and another of whatever the gentleman is having." He leans his elbow on the bar and his chin in his hand and gives Lovino an appraising look. He then gestures to himself. "This is a surprise for my husband, but he seems to have wandered off. I thought perhaps he had gotten himself into a drinking contest with Antonio. Or, they could just be reminiscing. I've known those two to sit and talk for *hours*."

"I haven't seen *either* of them," Lovino reiterates. He looks around the room once more, eyes drifting and landing on nothing in particular. The bartender returns with their drinks, another knowing smile on her face. Worry rises like bile in Lovino's throat, but he suppresses it by gulping down the contents of his glass in one go. It's cold and sweet and he's probably had way too many as it is, but he already wants another one.

"Uh-oh~" Francis sing-songs. "Trouble in paradise?"

"Shut the fuck up," Lovino snaps. "You have no idea what the *hell* you're talking about."

Francis gives him that *look* again and then smirks. "Let me guess. Antonio had plans to propose, and you found out, but now he *hasn't* proposed and you're worried he never will."

Lovino scowls but remains silent, reaching into his pocket and placing the ring box on the bar. Francis opens it, cooing about how beautiful the rings are and how good Antonio's taste in jewelry is.

"What would you say if he asked?" Francis wonders, and Lovino is reminded of his conversation with Ludwig last night.

"I don't know what I'd say."

"Does any part of you want to marry him?"

"Yes."

"And the part that *doesn't* want to marry him- why not? You two have been together for so long, it can't be the commitment you're afraid of."

"Things change," Lovino blurts. "Things change and people change and then they *leave*, and it's not like we've ever actually promised each other forever, but what if we *do* and then something *happens* and he *leaves* me-"

"What makes you think he's going to leave you?"

"He's done it before."

Francis sighs a sympathetic sigh, setting his wine glass down and putting a hand on Lovino's arm. "That was a very long time ago. And he came *back*, didn't he? He came back to you, and he hasn't left you since."

"Arthur and I have had our ups and downs," Francis continues. "That is putting it mildly, in fact. But even through the worst of it, through the fights and the wars and all the years we were apart, I never doubted that deep down, he really loved me, and that we'd always find our way back to each other."

"Now, with you and Antonio, it was different, oui? You haven't hit the same kind of rough patches that Arthur and I have. So in *my* mind, at least, there is no question that Antonio *adores* you, that it would *kill* him if he ever hurt you, or left you, or let anything come between the two of you. So the only question I do have is: do you feel that way about him?"

"Yes," Lovino replies immediately.

"Does *he* know that?"

"I." This gives Lovino pause. "Well, I've never said *those* exact words, but he knows. He *has* to."

"But you haven't *told* him."

"What does it *matter* if I've told him?" Lovino throws his hands in the air. "I'm not good with romantic shit like that- I've always hated saying that I need someone when it's completely obvious from the way I act every single *fucking* day."

"Romano, listen to me. I love Antonio. He is one of my oldest and dearest friends. But he's not too bright when it comes to these things- he has that in common with Arthur. If you want him to know something, you have to tell him out right. Subtlety has little to no effect."

"I-" Lovino starts. "I don't know how to tell him."

"Hm," Francis finishes his glass of wine, stands, and taps twice on the ring box. "Maybe you should just *show* him."

Lovino looks at the ring box, then at Francis, then at the ring box again.

"Maybe I will." He swallows around his pride. "Thanks, Frenchie."

"That's *Monsieur Bonnefoy-Kirkland* to you, petite tomate," Francis winks, waving over his shoulder as he sashays away. "You're welcome. Now go and get him."

Lovino waves down the bartender one last time.

"One shot of tequila," he orders, taking the ring box in hand. He feels his stomach flutter a little, but for once, it's not *entirely* from fear.

"On second thought," he amends, "make that a double."



Antonio is well and truly lost when Arthur finds him.

Turns out, there's an entire hedge maze in the backyard. And being that he's almost three bottles of wine drunk and not feeling all that sociable, Antonio thought it might be fun to try and solve the maze. Alone. That was almost an hour ago. Now it's dark and getting cold and he thinks he probably shouldn't have attempted this at night, while three sheets to the wind.

He nearly jumps out of his skin when he hears a noise behind him, footsteps crackling over twigs and fallen leaves. He spins, ready to bludgeon his attacker with his stolen wine bottle, but he's stunned instead by the brightness of a torch.

"Ah!" he screams, raising a hand to shield his eyes. "Who goes there?"

"The Kingdom of Great Britain," Arthur says back, laughter in his voice and in his face as he lowers his torch, allowing Antonio's eyes to adjust.

"How did you find me?" Antonio asks. "This place is a labyrinth! I'm completely turned around!"

"I designed this maze," Arthur explains. "And I'm still mostly sober."

"That- that makes sense." Antonio tilts his head and the whole world spins a little. "Why are you here? Shouldn't you be with your husband? Your guests?"

"*You're* one of my guests," Arthur points out, gesturing for Antonio to follow him as he begins to lead the way out of the maze. "And you disappeared. Someone had to come find you, and it seemed like I was the only one who noticed your absence."

Antonio's heart sinks and his stomach lurches. "I'm not surprised."

"Did something happen with Lovino?"

"I'm not entirely sure."

"He didn't reject you, did he?"

Arthur and Antonio haven't always gotten along, but they're friends now, and they have been for a long time. Antonio appreciates Arthur's directness and honesty for what it is- which is why he'd confided in Arthur about his plan to propose to Lovino. But right now, Arthur's words are blunt instruments, beating down on Antonio's shoulders with every syllable.

"I still haven't asked him," Antonio admits. "I lost the rings."

"Christ," Arthur swears, looking over his shoulder. "That's- I'm sorry."

"I think it's an omen," Antonio explains. "A *bad* one. It's like the universe is saying that maybe I'm not *supposed* to ask him. He'd probably just say no anyway. And I tell myself I'd be alright with that, but- it would break me, I think. It's not that what we have isn't enough, but..." his voice trails off when he realises he's too drunk to find the right words.

"You're too bloody hard on yourself, Toni." Arthur has stopped walking altogether now. "*Your* problem is that you don't think you're good enough, that he doesn't love you that much because he's so amazing and you can't possibly deserve him. I had the same problem with Francis, once."

He lifts his hand to the side of Antonio's face and pats his cheek, a gesture that used to be snide and condescending, back when they were both fighting tooth and nail for land and power. Now, though, it's familial and comforting.

"You see, the thing is, no matter what I did, how I hurt him or how he hurt me, we always found our way back to each other. He always found his way back to me. I eventually came to the conclusion that he wouldn't do that unless he really loved me."

Arthur turns and begins to walk again; Antonio stumbles after him.

"You and Lovino have been together for *how* many centuries? Two? Two and a half? Did it ever occur to you that maybe, just *maybe*, he stays with you because he wants to? It's not as if he's being *forced*. He could leave at anytime, and that might be what you're afraid of, but it hasn't happened. Now, don't think about it, just tell me- does he love you?"

"Yes." Antonio is sure of it, he *has* to be, because if Lovino doesn't love him than nothing in his life makes any sense at all.

"Then you *know* what he'll say, bad omens or not. All you have to do is ask."

They've emerged from the maze, out in to the light of the house, streaming through the glass doors of the ballroom and out onto the terrace. One of the doors stands open despite the cold, and a silhouette emerges. It looks like a woman for a second, but then-

"*Francis!*?" Arthur and Antonio exclaim in unison.

"C'est moi!" Francis descends the steps towards them, a vision in white.

"Surprise, mon amour!" he says to Arthur, leaving a big red lipstick kiss over Arthur's mouth.

"You- what- you-" Arthur is a stuttering, blushing mess. Antonio can well imagine the thoughts going on in his head right about now. Antonio is currently imagining *Lovino* in a dress like that and, well.

"Francis," he gives his friend a smile, "*Eres magnifico.*"

"Ah, merci, mon ami." Francis touches Antonio's cheek in the same place Arthur did earlier. "I'd love for us all to stay out here and chat, but I am *freezing*, and something very important is about to happen inside."

"Oh, is it time for the first dance already?" Arthur asks, suddenly pulled out of the trance that had him shamelessly ogling Francis.

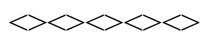
"Not quite," Francis replies, barely suppressing a grin.

"Oi! Everyone! Listen up!"

That's Lovino's voice, bolstered by speakers, filling the ballroom and drifting out into the garden.

"What is he doing?" Antonio asks, dumbfounded.

Francis chuckles, looping his arms around Arthur's shoulders. "You'll see."



Lovino doesn't like speaking in front of crowds. Never has, never will. Add that to the importance of what he's about to say, and the alcohol is barely taking the edge off. He

reminds himself to breathe and steps up to the microphone, closing his eyes as if he's bracing himself for a blow to the head.

"Oi! Everyone! Listen up!"

The din of clinking glasses and friendly discussion dies almost instantly. There isn't an soul present that doesn't immediately look at him. Lovino cracks his eyes open and sees this, sees everyone watching, and almost backs out of it altogether.

Just then, there's movement at the back of the room. Francis comes in from the garden, dragging Arthur by the hand, with Antonio not far behind. His eyes find Lovino's in an instant, and nothing can stop this now. Lovino lifts the ring box over his head, holding it up for all to see.

"Toni," he says, his voice faltering at first but not failing entirely. "I know you probably had some kind of idea of how you wanted this to happen, and I know you've been worried all day that it didn't go the way you'd planned-"

His heart is pounding, racing, driving him on.

"-but I just wanted you to know that I don't care how it happens. I know you want to be married to me, and- I'd like it if I were married to you." He lowers the ring box, takes a deep breath and looks down for a second at his shaking hands. "I'm not going to get down on one knee or anything, so don't get too excited, bastardo."

"Lovino," Antonio whispers, knowing that Lovino won't hear him but saying his name anyway, repeating it under his breath as he rushes through the crowd, forgetting they're even there, knowing this is how Arthur felt when Francis was walking down the aisle toward him. It is as if Antonio and Lovino are the only two people on Earth.

Lovino jumps down from the stage when he sees Antonio run. He begins to walk, intending to meet Antonio halfway; the rest of the room has dissolved into a blur of faces and colours and light. This is the highest that Lovino has ever felt. It'll only be a second now, until Antonio is in arm's reach and Lovino will finally feel that this is real, that this is happening, that all of his worrying has been for no reason after all.

Antonio is running, dodging people and tables to find his way into Lovino's embrace. He's just about reached him, just about made it home, when he trips, foot caught on the leg of a chair.

He flies forward through the air and crashes right into Lovino, the two of them landing on the floor in a sprawl of arms and legs and hands and mouths, neither of them noticing they've fallen until they've stopped kissing long enough to look at each other.

"You're so fucking clumsy," Lovino smiles.

"What can I say?" Antonio asks, and Lovino is already rolling his eyes, though his smile hasn't wavered. Antonio can't stop smiling either, thinks that maybe he never will.

"I fall for you all the time," he whispers, and kisses Lovino again.



Antonio catches the bouquet- Lovino catches the garter. They have a mock wedding right then and there, Antonio's eyes full of joyful tears when Lovino pushes the ring onto his finger. They've already started disagreeing about the actual ceremony, the whens and the wheres and the decorations that Lovino will simply abhor but will let Antonio have anyway. The bickering goes on as long as the dancing does; the two of them can be heard chatting away, exchanging arguments even as they refuse to let go of each other, kissing each other's engagement rings between complaints about guest lists and colour schemes.

They've never been happier.

## Chapter End Notes

The whole "he's left before" thing is a reference to a head canon of mine that Lovino was silently in love with Antonio when Antonio left to go on his expeditions/be a pirate during that period of Spain's history. They didn't get together until Antonio came back after years and years of being away. Same thing with why Arthur and Antonio didn't used to get along- I like to imagine they were pirate rivals on the high seas during that time. Francis was there too, probably.

Also [this](#) is what I imagine Francis's dress looks like but with a few more crystals on it probably.

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